[Pedro and Estrella]

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Evelio Andux (Cuban)

1412 Tenth Avenue

Ybor City

Tampa, Florida

(Cigar box maker)

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PEDRO AND ESTRELLA

In another hour it will be 1939. After an all-day drive from Jacksonville, my wife and I have arrived on the outskirts of Tampa's Latin settlement, Ybor City. A fat red-faced man in overalls is standing in front of a bar, and I ask him to direct me to the address of my wife's relatives. He has imbibed too freely to even understand my questions, so I thank him and drive on.

We pass a dog-race track, which has drawn a large crows. Two young Negro men are standing on the curbing, and I ask them for directions. Although well-intoxicated, they seem anxious to please and the directions they offer are [coherent?].

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Edith is impatient; she wants to reach her sister's house in time to celebrate the New Year with her. We soon locate the house, a dilapidated, unpainted two-story frame building, divided into four apartments.

A barrage of Spanish guests Edith as she goes up to the porch, and there is much hugging. I am introduced amid vigorous handshaking. Children gather in front of the house, and in Spanish: “He's an American. He sure looks it, too. You can tell by looking at him.” Estrella and her husband Pedro are middle-aged and have four children, two girls and two boys.

We are ushered into the front room, which is furnished with a modern dresser, and an old iron bed neatly covered and topped with a 2 befeathered carnival doll. There is a calendar on each wall, and a framed card proclaims: “Whichever way the wind doth blow Some heart is glad to have it go; So blow it East, or blow it West, The way it blows: That way is best.”

There are no chairs, so we sit on the bed. We are not invited to wash up after our trip.

“You will have to forgive our poor house,” says Estrella. “We used to have a nice place and nice furniture but it all got burned up. That one dresser is the only thing we saved out of the whole house. It just made me sick. Pedro was at work, the kids in school, and I was visiting with a friend. When I came home it was all burned. All our clothes and everything was gone and that's why we haven't got hardly anything now. The man who owned the house built it back again because he had insurance, but we didn't have non because it cost too much.”

“I know you use to have the nicest things,” says Edith. “Beautiful nice sheets and tablecloths, everything handmade and just beautiful. When I saw this house and furniture I couldn't believe it was where you lived.”

[Pedro and Estrella] http://www.loc.gov/resource/wpalh1.11060221

“I know. We use to have nice things I had been making and saving for a long time. After the fire Pedro went to his boss at the cigar box factory and told him how it was with us and asked if he could borrow some money. His boss asked him how much and Pedro asked for twenty dollars and his boss gave it to him. That was nice of him all right.”

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“I worked for him a long time,” says Pedro, “he know I pay him back all right. [md;]You want some wine? You like a sweet wine? I go get some wine, we celebrate the New Year.”

He leaps on his bicycle and disappears down the street. Estrella hesitantly puts on Edith's new fur coat. She stands before the dresser and turns at various angles, running her fingers slowly through the fur. “It sure is soft,” she says, “I don't guess I'm ever going to have me no coat like this one. It seems like what you haven't got is what you always want.”

“You don't need a heavy coat in Tampa,” replies Edith. “It's too warm to wear a coat like that here.”

“I sure would like to go to Key West to see mama,” says Estrella. I haven't seen mama in nine years. You know, when I'm working I can't leave, and when I'm not working I haven't got any money to go, so you see I don't get to see her. How is mama now? I guess she is getting fatter than ever. I send her a right pretty little lamp, like you set on the table, for Christmas. I wish I could have sent her something more better.”

“I think that was a nice present,” Edith says. “We wanted to send her a Beautyrest mattress for Christmas, but we just couldn't afford it, Beautyrests costs thirty-nine dollars and ninety-five cents; we can get them for wholesale price, about twenty-five dollars, but we still can't afford it this year. We sent her three sheets instead. I know she needs sheets bad. I sure wish we could have sent her the mattress, cause you know mama is getting old and it would be nice if she could have a good mattress to sleep on. The Beautyrest company advertises “Spend one-third of your life like a millionaire.” It's too late for mama

to 4 do that, but I wish she could at least sleep good for once in her life before she dies. I know it would make her feel a lot better."

"Mama needs teeth and glasses but it doesn't look like she can ever save up enough to get either one. She tries all her best to save enough to get them, but something always comes up and she has to spend the money [md;][?] somebody gets sick, or Rachel's work stops, or something always happens. She has to eat soup and everything soft. Mama always like to eat good food, too. And she liked to read all the time, but now she can't read so she listens to the news from Cuba over the radio. They have good news from Cuba; they say everything by saying double meaning and everybody understands but the government can't stop the broadcasts because they say everything double meaning."

"My kids would all like to live in Key West, because of the beaches," says Estrella. "In Ybor City there is no place for them to play and have a good time."

"You said that right," says one of the boys. "When I'm in Key West I go to the beach every day. But I like the schools here better; I have all good teachers except one—boy, she sure is tough! She tells us: "If you don't set down I'll knock you out of your seat!' She's tough all right. I have to walk twelve blocks to school everyday, but I'm use to it by now."

Pedro returns, waving aloft an un-labeled quart bottle half filled with wine. "Come back to the kitchen," he says.

We pass through the second room, which is furnished with two iron beds, a straight chair without a back, and more calendars. Clothes are 5 hung on a cord behind the door. The kitchen is equipped with a three-burner oil stove, two unpainted wooden tables, and four chairs.

Pedro pours the wine into glasses and drinks what is left from the bottle. "You lika some coffee?" he asks. We nod. The strong black Cuban coffee is soon made, and served

in glasses with evaporated milk. A long loaf of Cuban bread is broken into pieces and buttered.

“You see I keep the bread basket up over the stove,” Pedro explains. “I throw a leetle bita bread over in there and then some week when money is scarce we take out those stale breads and warm them in the oven. —This is good fresh bread; I got it this afternoon.”

“We will have to hurry,” says Estrella. “In a few minutes it will be twelve o'clock and we hafta go out in the street to see the New Year in.”

We finish hurriedly and go out to the porch. The greatest noise is made by the children who fill the street; some of them shout in English, Spanish, Italian, or in all three languages. Several firecrackers pop.

“Just a few more minutes,” says Pedro.

Two blocks down the street the upper balconies of the Italian Club are visible and the orchestra can be heard playing Cuban and American dance music. Suddenly we hear five shots, and see a policeman silhouetted on the balcony of the Italian Club. He reloads his revolver and fires five more times into the sky.

“It's 1939!” shouts a neighbor. Everyone yells and laughs; only the children do not sound forced and artificial. They race about the street, shooting a few firecrackers. There is a barrage of shot-gun fire 6 from several sectors, and soon the shots spatter back upon the roofs. The small boys in front of the house are trying to [?] the lead out of some shotgun shells, so they can fire the caps. A small girl screams, her fingers split by an exploding firecracker. She runs down the street wailing.

A ten cent Roman candle is discharged from the house next door; the height of the display, it is admired by everyone. It is not long before the limited supply of firecrackers is exhausted. Estrella calls to her children. Finally she gives up calling, and chases them in

the street. She catches each one, and holds them squirming while she kisses them on the cheek.

Suddenly it is oppressively quiet. Pedro says: “Well, I guess that's all. It's 1939 and it don't feel no different to me.”

“Hey!” yells a neighbor in Spanish, “call [Scaglione?] (the funeral home next door) to come pick up the dead one!”

“What dead one?” asks Pedro.

“1938.”

“Ha! Ha!” laughs Pedro, “You got me that time all right. I bit right on to that one.”

“Would you like to go somewhere tonight?” asks Estrella.

I suggest a cafe of some sort[[md;]?]anywhere we can dance and buy drinks.

“You don't mean a jook joint, do you?” Estrella asks. “Jooking is for unmarried men.”

“That's what you think,” replies Pedro, “plenty married men go jooking.”

“I know they do, but that's not so good.”

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“You don't know what jooking means. Jooking means having a good time anywhere, drinking and dancing. We go somewhere nice. We leave the kids with my brother. He don't mind to stay with them; we give him a leetle wine and he be all right.”

“You put on your tie,” Estrella tells Pedro. He doesn't seem to like the idea, but goes into the inner bedroom and emerges with a tie under the collar of his polo shirt.

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“Pedro, can't you wear a shirt tonight? That tie don't look good without a real shirt!” Pedro grumbles as he puts on a heavily starched white shirt.

One of the children appears with Pedro's brother, who is rubbing his eye sleepily.

“Thees is my brother, Thomas,” says Pedro.

“I'm very pleased to meet you,” says Thomas, “we was expecting you to come yesterday or earlier today.”

“Madre de Dios!” suddenly cries Estrella. “I've torn my stockings on this rough old furniture—the only pair I've got doesn't that I can wear out! I just bought them for Christmas. Oh, this makes me sick! My only pair: I just paid sixty-nine cents for them and now they are torn and I don't know when I can buy me another pair. Well, no use to cry over it. But it makes me feel terrible; I wanted to take such good care of them so they would last me a long time but now just look at them, ruined!”

“Well, you all better get started,” says Thomas. “I wish I could go with you, but I guess somebody has to stay with these kids. Maybe I can go with you before you leave. Don't forget to send one of the 8 kids after some wine.”

We send one of the children for the wine; he can get the empty bottle half filled again for fifteen cents. Our driving off attracts the attention of everyone in sight.

“Where to?” I ask.

“We can drive up and down Seventh Avenue,” says Estrella. “That is the only lighted-up street in Ybor City where there is anything to see. I guess you will want to drive over to Tampa.”

I assure her that we would prefer to stay in Ybor City, so we drive along Seventh Avenue. Narrow, and with a street car track down the center, it is well lighted with neon signs.

Most of the shops have Italian and Spanish names. The cafes, barrooms, and restaurants are thronged with people, many of them dressed in tuxedos and evening gowns. The restaurants are being heavily patronized by Americans from Tampa.

“Let's drive by the Cuban Club and the Spanish Club,” suggests Estrella. “They haven't seen that. There are big dances at all the clubs tonight; New Years is the time of the best dances.”

Both the Cuban and Spanish Clubs, impressive structures of some architectural beauty, are surrounded by many parked automobiles.

“I have make a model of the Cuban Club,” says Pedro. “I show it to you when we go home. You know, I just make it for pretty; I no have nothing else to do so I make a model of the club. After I paint it, if it look good I take it and put it in the club.”

“The Cuban Club has a social medicine Society that has its own clinic, nurses, doctors, everything,” says Estrella. “It sure is a big help to poor people like us. They have individual and family 9 policies; we have a family policy for sixty cents a week. Not long ago I had to have an operation and I went to the clinic and had it, and it didn't cost me a cent. Whenever anybody in the family gets sick and needs medicine or a doctor, the insurance pays for it.”

We drive back to Seventh Avenue, park the car, and walk along the sidewalk looking at the shops.

“Everything is much cheaper here than it is in Jacksonville,” remarks Edith. “Dresses, shoes, hats, everything[[md;]?]everything costs twice this much in Jacksonville.”

“Grub is plenty cheap in Ybor City, too,” says Pedro. “I feed my family of six, on five or six dollars a week, O.K.”

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Almost every shop has a poster in its window, labeled: AID THE SPANISH VICTIMS OF FACIST AGGRESSION. The posters show a small child crying amid ruins, and bombing planes flying overhead.

“Ybor City has sent plenty money and clothes and stuff to Spain,” Pedro says. “The Cubans, Spaniards, and Italians here are all feel sorry for the Spanish people. Even the Italians boo Mussolini when he comes on the screen. The Italians here sure hates Mussolini all right.”

We pass a magazine stand, which includes in its display a number of magazines printed in Spanish. There is one magazine, Futuro, which has on its cover a group of Spanish women and children with their arms upstretched in horror, while overhead are pictured bombers with the Italian facist insignia and the [??]. The cover is labeled, in Spanish, “ Glory to God in the Highest, and Peace on Earth to those Men of Good Will .” I open the cover and see that Futuro is published by 10 the University of Labor, Mexico City, Vincente Lombardo Toledama, editor.

We spend several hours in a small cafe, eating Cuban sandwiches and mixing Cuba Libras with [Ronrico?] and Coca-Cola. There is a jook-organ (nickelodian), which offers a selection of eight records of Cuban music, and two records of American music. There are couples present who dance the rhumba gain and again. Estrella and Pedro dance the rhumba also. Apparently they are both enjoying themselves.

“It's good to go out and have a good time with your husband,” says Estrella. “I like to go to dances and all that but Pedro don't take me much. I don't care so much about shows[—?]my kids is sure crazy about them, and they go two or three times every week. The kids can see two shows for ten cents.”

It is five-thirty in the morning when we finally decide to go home.

[Pedro and Estrella] http://www.loc.gov/resource/wpalh1.11060221

“This is the latest I ever stayed out in my life!” Estrella exclaims.

Edith and I are offered the front room; the four children are all sleeping in one bed in the back room, and Estrella and Pedro will sleep in the other bed.

“You want some coffee before you go to sleep?” asks Pedro.

“If I drink coffee now I won't be able to sleep,” I reply.

“Man, a little swallow coffee before you go to bed make you sleep good. Cuban coffee don't keep you awake like American coffee.”

I insist that I do not want coffee. I try to pull down the paper shades over the windows, but they will not roll. There is nothing to do but turn out the lights and undress in the dark.

“Are you warm enough?” calls Estrella from the other room.

“Yes,” Edith replies, “we are sleeping in our robes.”

“My Pedro don't like for me to wear much clothes to bed,” laughs Estrella. “He don't like for me to wear pajamas; he likes gowns. Sure! You have no sex appeal in pajamas. You should see me in the ones I've got on now.”

The next morning we are awakened when a man and two young girls, about eighteen and twenty, walk in the front door without knocking. They all say “Pardon us,” and walk hurriedly through the room. The girls blush and look towards the wall.

After dressing, we go into the kitchen. We wash our faces and brush our teeth at the sink on the back porch, which serves both downstairs apartments.

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“You better look out for the ceiling over the sink,” warns Estrella. “The sink upstairs isn't connected to no pipe, and the water drains through that hole and falls down into the sink down here. Sometimes if you aren't careful it comes down on top of you when you are not expecting it and ruins your clothes.”

“They shoulda tore this house down long ago,” Pedro says, as he prepares his coffee for breakfast. “That floor leaks everytime they scrub upstairs, too. The johnny (toilet) for these apartments is on the back porch but it doesn't have any water connected to it so we have to pour water in it to flush it. The man who owns this house is a deputy sheriff. He lives upstairs and raises hell all the time about living in such a slum house and says he is going to tear it down and build a garage apartment but he never does. He 12 is sassy and nobody likes him. Just because he's a deputy sheriff he thinks he's a big shot, I guess.”

“Pedro was going to paint the wall,” says Estrella. “He can buy cheap paint and paint it himself. He painted the other house we lived in all by himself. He's a good painter. But the landlord keeps saying he is going to tear the house down, so Pedro doesn't paint it. He's been saying he was gonna tear it down for three years and he hasn't done it yet.

“Ybor City is the slum section where only very poor people live. We live in Ybor City because we can't afford to live nowhere else[—?]like everybody who lives in Ybor City. They don't like it but it is all they can do without more money. There are lots of nice, quiet apartments in Hyde Park over in Tampa, but they are expensive.”

“We pay a dollar and quarter a week rent on this place. We don't have no bath or toilet or nothing like that. I don't mind bathing in a tin tub cause I been use to it all my life. You should seen me when I went to visit Alicia in Miami. She has a beautiful bathroom, tile all around and everything; a perfect johnny and mirror and everything just perfect. I got in the shower and stayed all day most. I sang and sang in the shower and turned on the radio and had the best time.”

[Pedro and Estrella] http://www.loc.gov/resource/wpalh1.11060221

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“What time is it?” I ask, after we finish a breakfast of grapefruit, coffee, and bread.

“That clock is fast,” Estrella answers. “My husband, he always sets it fast so I will get up in time to get the children off to school. I wake up and the clock says seven-thirty so I go 13 back to sleep and then wake up and the clock says eight, so I say ‘let me get up from here so the children won't be late’ and it is really only seven-thirty.”

“Every morning when I get up I fix one leetle swallow of coffee and drink it, then go to the panaderia for hot Cuban breads and come back and have more coffee with bread, then go to my work,” Pedro says.

“I want to show you the model of the Cuban Club I make,” he continues, and goes into a closet on the back porch. He returns with a neatly made model, several feet high and long. “I just make this from my mind; I no have nothing to go by. See inside; the ballroom upstairs, and the place for the orchestra. I make it with paper and shellac I get from the factory. I'm going to paint it white—I wish I had better cellophane for the windows.

“What you writing down?” Estrella asks me as I begin to take notes openly.

I explain something of the life history program of the Federal Writers' Project.

“I don't know why you want to write stories about us, but don't get our real name in it. Call me Estrella; I like that name better than any. I always did want people to call me Estrella. It's a pretty name.

“All I can say for myself is that I've done my duty by Uncle Sam—I had four kids before I was twenty years old. That was fast work. but them days is gone forever. It's nice to have kids if you can afford to take care of them and give them some of the things they need. You know I want to try and give my kids an education. If I can do that I die happy to know that they got educated, because without no education you 14 can't make a living these days. It's hard to make a living even if you have got an education, much less without one.

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“My kids all hate to go to school, except Carmen—she has a very good head and makes good grades in everything. The other kids has good heads too, but they sure hate school. They rather play with marbles, I guess. But if I can just get them all educated through the twelfth grade I will get satisfied.”

“You ought to read some good books yourself,” says Edith. “My husband is making me read educational books.”

“I know I ought to,” admits Estrella, “but I like to read something with a little life and love to it. I read love, romance, silk stocking, and detective magazines. It seems like I just can't get my mind on education books, and I can't understand them anyway. In Key West when I went to school they didn't teach us enough English words to read those kind of books. I know it's good to read good books.”

“What's the story of your life?” I ask Pedro.

“It ain't much of a story,” he replies. “My brother is fifty-four and I'm thirty-six, and the baby of twelve kids. My mother died when I was four years old. You know it's bad for kids not to have no mother; that's the most worst thing. That's why I didn't get no education; but I can read a leetle and write my name.

“An old Negro nanny raised my family. She sure was good to us. She is very old and sick now and me and my brother have to pay for her to go to the hospital all the time.

“I tell you something what happen in Key West before I moved to Tampa. I didn't have nothing to do so I got a job in a restaurant 15 washing dish for six dollar a week. Then one day the cook leave town without telling anybody and the restaurant opened up one morning without no cook. I make the pancake for breakfast; make two for him to try first. I put a leetle melted butter on each one and a square of melted butter on top of the top pancake and he like em good.

[Pedro and Estrella] http://www.loc.gov/resource/wpalh1.11060221

“I cook plenty black bean with rice and [lotsa?] good things that day and alla customers they like good and the manager he say I can be cook alla time. I ask how much he pay me to cook and he say ten dollar a week. Well, that day I had worked from six-thirty in the morning to ten that night so I tell him I no cook for ten dollar but if he want to give me fifteen dollar a week that's all right. No tell me to finish working that week till he could get another cook, so the next day I just didn't come back.

“How I work in cigar box factory. We make forty thousand boxes a day. The girls dress them boxes up mighty pretty. The factory sure is a prison, too. I kinda hate to start work because I know I'll have to keep on working steady until this time next year. We work steady all the time. The box factory don't close down like the cigar factories cause we always got orders coming in from all over the country.

“Lots of cigar factories closes down after Christmas every year because there is not very good business right after Christmas. At the box factory they give everybody who worked there ten dollar for a Christmas present. That was nice. I wanted to buy my kids some clothes with it but I thought maybe I better save it so in case there is sickness or something like that happen I have a leetle something.

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“There is about three hundred people working in the box factory so I guess that makes about three thousand dollar they give away to us for Christmas. But they can afford it, that company is making millions for the owners. Government man made an investigation last year to see how much them owners are making and they published how much it was in the papers. We saw one of them papers over here, and we read where the plant director is making eighteen thousand dollar a year. Man, we was plenty darn sore.”

“Some fellers say ‘he making all that money every year and we working like slaves for twelve dollar a week!’ You know them government fellers investigating can learn anything.

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I been working fifteen years in the box mill. Fifteen years is a long time. We makes the leetle thin paperwood out of cedar to wrap the good cigars in; that keeps them from drying and keeps out the bugs too. We learned how to make that kind of wood-paper. Me and my helper is the only ones the manager trusts with loading those cars to go into the steamer. We was the ones showed him the way to do it. He wanted to put that paper-thin wood right in the steam but we told him it ought to have a heavy wood two or three inches thick on top to keep it from warping and burning. So he told us to go ahead and try it and when he seen how good it came out, so pretty, he told us to go ahead and always do it that way.

During the Christmas rush they tried to put another feller to loading those cars for the steam, and the man didn't know how to do it and the car burnt up, all black. Man, them cars cost plenty money too. The shop man had the car cleaned up and didn't say nothing about it or 17 the man who did it would lose his job.

“There is one Negro man work there, seventy-five years old. He been working in that business for more than fifty-five years. He is the only colored man working there and he has another colored man to help help. A lot of crackers from out in the woods is working there. We can't get no union started cause them crackers will work for anything. Them wild cracker people have their own garden; they work for enough to buy a little bacon and a sack of flour and they is satisfied.”

We all go out on the front porch; there are no chairs, so we perch on the railing.

Two young Cuban men across the street are busily repairing flat tires on an old model Buick, the top of which has been out off so the rear can be used a truck. Pedro says that each morning it has at least two flat tires, which must be fixed before they drive to the city dump heap where they salvage scrap iron. The iron is then taken to Port Tampa and sold for a small sum per pound.

[Pedro and Estrella] http://www.loc.gov/resource/wpalh1.11060221

“I think they ship all that iron to Japan,” says Pedro. “People been digging iron out of that junk heap for years, and it looks like it never gives out.”

An aged and crippled Negro man stops in front of a house on the corner, where a group of children, including Negroes, [mulattoes?], Spaniards, Cubans, and Italians, are playing marbles in the black dirt of the front yard. A light-skinned child runs into the house, and returns with a very black Negro woman, who gives the crippled man several coins. He removes his hat, bows his head, thanks her, and shuffles on down the street.

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“You may not believe it,” says Estrella, “but that Negro woman is that white-looking kid's mother. They are all colored people in that house[—?]they are very nice people, too. Those kids all have a good time playing together during the holidays. The colored skin, even the white-looking ones, have to go to separate schools.

I try to help anybody all I can. If I can treat anybody nice I try all my best to treat them all right. You know, I consider myself the same as everybody. Everybody in this world is equal. Of course some people has more money than others but that don't make no difference except that rich people think they are better than poor people.

A young Cuban man, about twenty-two years old, stops by to see Pedro. He sits on this porch railing, and glances through a pulp-paper pamphlet entitled:

FACT THE FACTS And Learn The Only One Way of Escape

He tosses it to me with a laugh.

“I don't believe there is any facts in it,” he says. “Some crazy man gave it to me and then asked me if I would ‘contribute’ a dime. I told him ‘hell no.’ Them people go all around giving away their books and collecting five cents here and ten cents there and it all mounts

up. I don't believe in that kind of god, but I do believe that there is something greater than us that nobody knows anything about.

In examining the pamphlet, I see inside the cover the following: Of such importance are these facts that Judge Rutherford's speech at Royal Albert Hall, London, England, was transmitted by radio beam and direct line wires to other auditoriums in more than 50 cities in the 19 United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, New England, and Tasmania, where, all together, more than 130,000 assembled in convention. Simultaneously it was broadcast by a transcontinental chain of 118 United States radio stations. It is now published that millions more may read, rightly face the facts, and be lastingly benefited."

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"I just got in off of a boat from Cuba," continues the young man. "We hadn't no sooner got off the boat when the International Seamans' Union officers tried to get us who are members to sign an agreement that if there was any more fighting with the National Maritime Union we would pitch in and help the ISU. It seems that not long ago the NMU

sent a bunch of guys to an ISU meeting to bring up some controversial issues. Well, the meeting ended in a free-for-all, and the hall was wrecked.

“Then when the NMU called a meeting, the ISU went to their meeting and wrecked their hall; they broke all the windows and chairs and everything. When the organizer explained all that to us when we got off the boat, we called a meeting to talk it over. We decided to tell him, ‘hell no, we wouldn't fight.” Why should we get mixed up in such foolishness? Lots of them boys in the NMU is good friends to us, so why should we fight with them just because a few union leaders want us to fight?

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“Then NMU fellows what pulled that sit-down strick on the S.S. CUBA last year was using their feet faster than their heads. Striking aint no child's business, and they shoulda gotten a lawyer to look at the ship's contracts before they started anything. You see, the CUBA had a mail contract with the United States Government, and the contract said something about the mail not being held up more than two weeks. That's why all the courts ruled against the union, because the strike held up the mail. If they had just called off the strike for a couple of days before those two weeks were up, and then started the strike all over again, the union would have won out. But now all them boys have lost their jobs and can't get em back. I heard that the company offered to take most of them back if they would resign from the union, but only a few of em did.”

A dark complexioned girl passes the house; she has an attractive figure and wears a tight-fitting dress.

“Hello Brunette!” calls Pedro.

“She is not a good woman,” explains Estrella. “She is not married; she goes with anybody. She go with anybody for fifty cents—less than that—for a good time. Hasn't she got some disease?”

“I don't know,” answers Pedro.

“Is she a Negro?”

“No, her mother is Cuban; I don't guess her own mother knows who her father is. She looks like a Puerta Rican—I guess there was some jumping the fence.”

“I sure wouldn't change places with her,” Estrella says with conviction. “And me with four kids. At least I am more better off than she is. Pedro was nasty to me for awhile. But now he realizes that what he 21 has at home is more better than what he can find on the streets.”

“Estrella is plenty jealous,” Pedro laughs. “I like women with plenty jealous and temper so I can tame em down.”

I have enjoyed my visit to Ybor City so much that I begin to consider the possibility of remaining longer than I had planned. I ask Pedro if it would inconvenience him greatly for us to delay our departure for several days.

“You have a good time?” he asks. “O.K. you stay as long as you want. You know we don't have much but we do the best we can for you to be happy as long as you can stay.”

So Pedro and I drive to the telegraph office to wire my State director of my change of plans. Pedro watches me carefully as I draft the telegram. He is amazed when I send it collect, and walk out without paying. “[Whazza?] matter?” he asks. “You no have to pay for telegram? Man, how you do that?

When we return to the house, Edith has seen her other sister, Amanda, who has invited us to spend the next few days with her. We pack our things, assisted by Pedro, Estrella, and the children.

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“You come by to see us every day while you are here,” says Estrella. “I wish you would stay with us, but it's true Amanda has more room.”

As we leave, Pedro says, “I hope you find lots of stuff to write good stories. I tella you something: if you tell everybody you is a Federal Writer that makes them think you is a policea or something and they no talk to you; if you just say you are a WPA relief writer they will talk to you much more better.”

[Pedro and Estrella] http://www.loc.gov/resource/wpalh1.11060221